

CLASSIFICATION
CONFIDENTIAL
DATE OF INFORMATION
May 1953

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83-00423R000600100002-2 INFORMATION REPORT

25X1A

SERIAL NO.

CONFIDENTIAL
SECURITY INFORMATION

OFFICE OF NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

OPNAV FORM-3820-2 (REV. 2-53)

73-53

DATE OF REPORT

28 May 1953

EVALUATION

C-3

REQUEST NO.

FROM
DIO/1END

SOURCE

Press/Confidential Informant

CANADA - Doukhobor Situation.

BRIEF (FOR REPORTS OF MORE THAN PAGE, ENTER CAREFUL SUMMARY)

C 18568

LEBEDOFF followers ask the dismissal of the Consultative Committee, and encourage relocation in Costa Rica. Radical Sons of Freedom and Consultative Committee officials discuss emigration to Central America. G. C. ANDREW, vice-chairman of the Consultative Committee, urges better understanding of Doukhobor mentality and arraignment of the criminals.

Encl: (1) Newspaper clipping (copy), The Vancouver Province, 20 May 1953.

Report:

1. Indications of a struggle within the ranks of the Doukhobors in the Kootenay country of British Columbia for leadership is informant's latest report, which states that a group of Sons of Freedom has asked the B. C. government to dismiss the provincial Doukhobor Consultative Committee which has been trying to solve the problems of this troublesome sect. The move came as John LEBEDOFF, ousted leader of the Sons, renewed his attempts to pick up the reins of Freedonite leadership.

2. At a meeting in Krestova, 100 Lebedoff followers drafted a resolution to be forwarded to the B. C. government. It read:

"From this date (17 May 1953) we do not wish the Consultative Committee to have any part in the solution of the Doukhobor problem; therefore we wish it cancelled."

LEBEDOFF denounced the Committee in a lengthy speech to the meeting. He said it had done nothing for the Sons of Freedom and was a costly burden upon the taxpayers.

3. LEBEDOFF's followers were circulating a petition stating that they wished to leave Canada and settle in Costa Rica. The petition said government help would be needed, "but our own resources will be used as far as possible". It suggested that delegations be sent to Costa Rica. If the land is unsuitable, other countries would be approached to admit the Sons. LEBEDOFF advertised in the Kootenay newspapers that he was "taking the task to solve the Doukhobor problem".

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4. At a second meeting, following LEBEDOFF's, the Krestova youth group of the reformed Sons of Freedom, declared its allegiance to Steffan SOROKIN, who is still in Uruguay trying to secure new lands for his followers.

5. Meanwhile, residents of the Doukhobor country, who have been conducting nightly patrols to prevent new Doukhobor violence, have increased their number and have threatened to take the law into their own hands should any Doukhobor be found in the act of committing arson or other destruction. The RCMP has also continued its nightly vigil in Doukhobor districts, and while they have so far been unable to discover which of the Doukhobors have been guilty of recent outrages, they intend to see that no further violations of the law are committed.

6. In a Seattle Times news dispatch from Appledale, B.C., an article stated:

"A poll of Doukhobors, in the tension-filled Slocan Valley in British Columbia's Kootenay country, disclosed yesterday (19 May 1953) that 100 percent were in favor of migrating to Central America.

"The disclosure came from Doukhobors at the first meeting of its kind between members of the Radical Sons of Freedom sect and non-Doukhobor Consultative Committee officials.

"Steffan S. SOROKIN, the Doukhobor spiritual leader, was reported to have obtained ample land for the migration plan."

7. On 20 May 1953 the Vancouver Province printed a letter from Professor G. C. ANDREW, Vice-Chairman of the Consultative Committee on Doukhobor problems, in which he covers all phases of the Doukhobor problems. (See enclosure (1).) This member of the University of British Columbia faculty reviews the work the committee is trying to accomplish and requests the public to refrain from using the word "Douks" as a catch-all for all Doukhobors, asking that the public try to understand the Doukhobor mentality and that it is necessary to concentrate on catching some criminals who are trying to promote law-breaking, violence and discord. He also thanks the press for the general caution with which stories involving Doukhobors are treated.

8. Shortly after the Professor's letter was published, a news item in the Seattle Times of 23 May indicated the following:

"Nelson, B.C. Torch-throwing arsonists early today burned seven homes and failed in attempts on two others in the Kootenay district Doukhobor villages.

"The homes burned all belonged to the radical Sons of Freedom Doukhobors and were in the villages of Krestova and nearby Goose Creek. The fires came following the Friday warning from Premier W. A. C. Bennett that the 'fooling around' is over for the Doukhobors. 'The fires followed exactly the same pattern as the burnings at Parry Siding and Appledale last month, when 13 houses were destroyed', a police spokesman said.

"Fire is a Doukhobor form of protest, and it is not uncommon for the 'Sons' to put the torch to their own homes."

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ORIGINATING AGENT'S COMMENT:

As previously intimated by informant, John LEBEDOFF has been making headway in his efforts to seize control of the Doukhobors while Stefan SROKIN is absent. He is a bad influence and his latest gesture will undoubtedly inflame the violent Sons of Freedom who have fallen away from SROKIN. It will not be surprising to see the RCMP remove LEBEDOFF from the scene of these incidents.

J. T. Holmes
Special Agent

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26 May 1953

PREPARING OFFICER'S COMMENT:

The recent Sons of Freedom arsonist demonstrations on 23 May in the West Kootenays occurred in response to a program outlined on 22 May by Attorney-General Bonner to Justice Minister Garson. The program was Premier Bennett's newly drafted 8-point proposal which recommends:

1. The establishment of a Doukhobor commission as outlined in the Legislature to deal with Doukhobor rehabilitation.
2. Resale of Orthodox and Independent Doukhobor lands now being held by the provincial government.
3. Recognition of Doukhobor marriages, and extension of the franchise of Doukhobors under new legislation at the fall session of the Legislature.
4. Obedience to laws regarding registration of vital statistics.
5. Cancellation of drivers' licenses of law-breaking Doukhobors.
6. Required school attendance of school-age children, beginning with the fall term.
7. Request federal reimbursement for "extraordinary expenditures" in dealing with the Doukhobor problems.
8. Prosecution of Doukhobors for non-compliance with the law.

On Sunday, 24 May, a meeting of 250 Freedonites occurred at Krestova, B. C., at which time the group voted to oust the 35-man Executive Committee of Reformed Doukhobors, which was left in charge of Freedonite affairs by Steffan SORKIN when he went to Uruguay last November. The group also voted to have no further dealings with the Consultative Committee on Doukhobor affairs. Lebedoff was present at the Krestova meeting, but reportedly exhibited no active participation. Anton KOLESNIKOFF came to the meeting and pleaded for the non-rejection of the Consultative Committee, but to no apparent avail.

Lebedoff is clearly responsible for the whole scheme to throw off the leadership of the Executive Committee, representing Sorkin, and for the promotion of non-adherence to the Consultative Committee.

John LEBEDOFF has succeeded in winning control to an evident degree. The provincial and federal governments face a stone wall against Lebedoff leadership. Legislation and constructive long-range proposals for the settlement of Freedonite problems have been demonstratively rejected by the Lebedoff Freedonite followers. It is more than apparent that the desires of the group, under the Lebedoff influence, are to remain a constant enigma, distinct, and unabsorbed into the status of law-abiding Canadian citizens, with fully accorded privileges.

Relocation of the Freedonites now, more than ever, appears to be the only favorable solution for the Canadian government. The unpredictable radical Sons of Freedom previously protested the plan to migrate to Costa Rica, but recently, under Lebedoff's

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encouragement, favor the move. The Reformed Sons of Freedom have been working hard to encourage emigration to Central America. Cooperative action for the relocation is scheduled to be discussed in Victoria, B.C. on 15 June by representatives of the provincial and federal governments.

Prepared:

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Forwarded:

R. S. Fable
CAPT, USN

Excerpt from "Letters to the Editor", the Vancouver Daily Province of 20 May 1953.

"Don't Condemn All Doukhobors"

Sir:

"Doukhobor affairs have been receiving a great deal of attention from the public and press in recent weeks and they have been causing a great deal of concern to the government, the non-Doukhobors who live in the Kootenay area, and to the different sections of the Doukhobors themselves.

"I have no wish at this time to add to the number of suggestions as to what should or should not be done in the Kootenay area. I am convinced that the police have tried and are trying very hard to bring home to the criminals responsible for such illegal acts as have occurred. Theirs is a very difficult and thankless task that is not made any easier when feeling is running high.

"In addition, everyone must sympathize with the state of mind of those who live in the Kootenay area. Nothing is or can be more wearing than to live in a state of uncertainty about the security of one's property and the chance of personal injury.

"But here again the only chance for relief lies in every assistance being given to the police to bring home to criminals their responsibility for their acts. The government has strengthened the police details in those areas and every care and precaution is being taken that the police can take.

"At a time like this, when feeling runs high, and for very understandable reasons, it is particularly important not to lump all Doukhobors together. The independent Doukhobors and the Orthodox Doukhobors have a long record of cooperative and useful service with the Canadian community.

"Even the majority of the Sons of Freedom, though their behavior and mental outlook is at times difficult to understand, do not use violence. What is necessary is to concentrate on catching some criminals who are doing their best to promote law-breaking, violence and discord; and the rest of us are playing their game when we lump all Doukhobors with them. That is what the law-breakers want. They want Canadians to reject all the Doukhobors, so that they can provide disaffected leadership for the total group.

"In this situation, therefore, may I once more urge the desirability of avoiding the use of such words as "Douks" as a catch-all. The more we can identify the individual sections of the Doukhobor faith, the more we will be doing justice to many good law-abiding people and the more we will frustrate the efforts of law-breakers to take over leadership.

"On behalf of the Consultative Committee on Doukhobor Affairs I would like to express our thanks for the general caution with which stories involving Doukhobors are treated by the press. I would also like to say that the efforts of the press to differentiate between the Sons of Freedom and other Doukhobors, whenever possible, is much appreciated by the vast majority of Doukhobors themselves.

G. C. ANDREW

Vice-Chairman, Consultative Committee
on Doukhobor Problems.
UBC."

DIO/13ND Report No. 13-53

all of Encl. (1)

Subject Canadian Doukhobors